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Casual comfort beckons.
PHOTO BY: Don Sciba/
Satterwhite Log Homes

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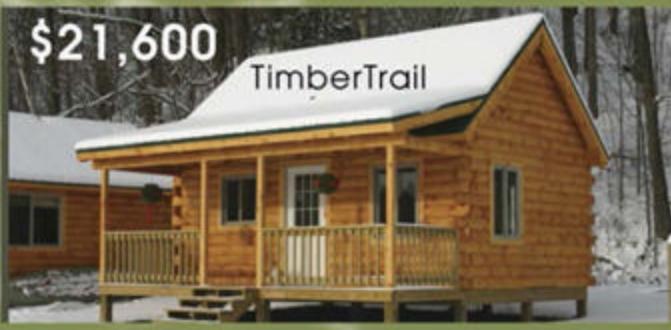
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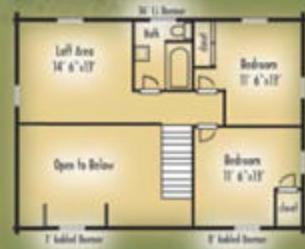
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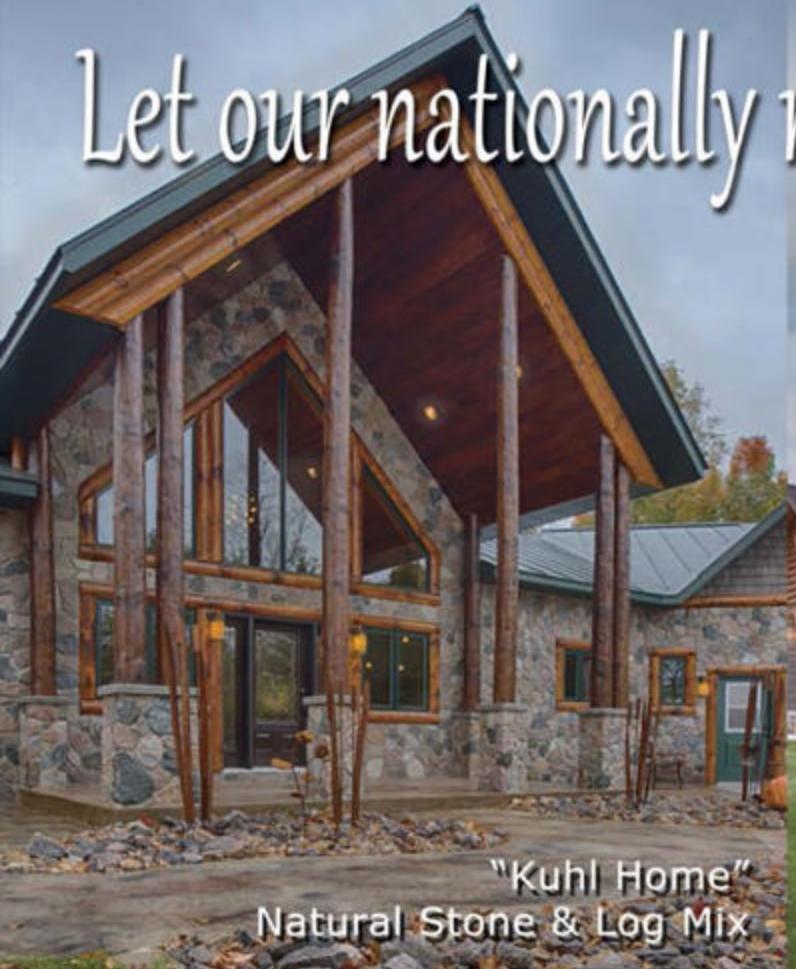
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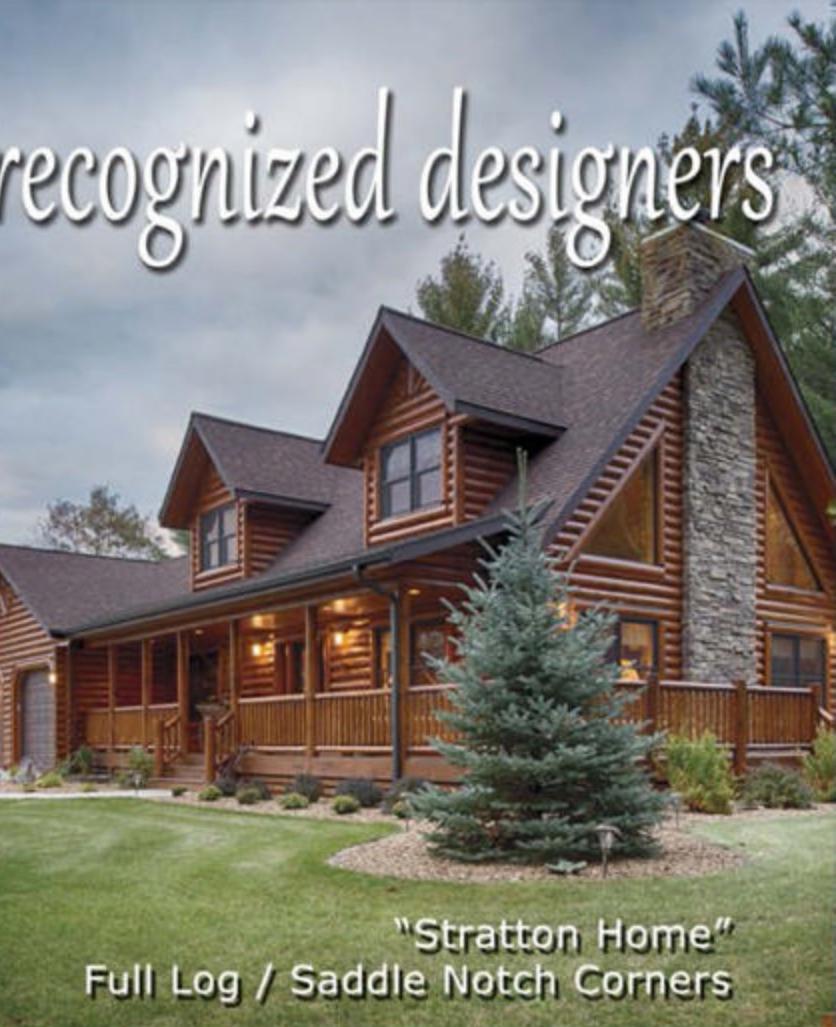
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GOLDEN OLDIES



Watching a general contractor once, I realized I'd make a lousy GC, especially for my own home. For starters, I lack orchestration skills. The aggravation alone wouldn't be worth saving — what, \$20,000, \$50,000? But at what cost? Start with needing to buy a pickup truck for endless errands and beaucoup job-site liability insurance.

If I did welcome formidable challenges, I might savor some active role in creating my log home. Lasting memories, for sure. Otherwise, I'd eat any so-called savings and hire a professional contractor. Oh, I'd stop by regularly, feel some site excitement, poke around, make necessary decisions and splash mud onto my new pickup to look more rugged. That's about the extent of many people's involvement. Sure, we admire the dedicated few who undertake such projects and succeed. Most of us, though, are just impatient to live in a log home.

A growing number prefer already built log homes. Not from desperation, but because they're available. They spare you the suspense of what a new one costs and how it'll turn out. If log homes really are built to last hundreds of years, then one only in its teens or twenties has lots of lifetime left.

Going the used-home route, though, especially with the likelihood that the original owners designed it, you're buying someone else's dream. You can't modify the floor plan as you might if you were designing it from scratch. That doesn't mean you'll hate it or can't live with it. Just be open-minded. It may have features you hadn't considered that delight you. Sometimes the beauty of the home's setting, after the landscaping has matured and no trace of construction lingers, more than makes up for initially inconvenient room layouts. Simply adjust and be grateful that you're living in a log home.

It's unrealistic to expect to find an existing log home exactly where you'd prefer to live. You might expect that log homes for sale would be hard to find even where you wouldn't want to live. But pre-lived log homes do turn up, regularly in fact, often in desirable locations, on good land and in decent shape. Their price is fixed (barring any undiscovered repairs — reason enough to pay someone who understands logs to inspect the condition of yours). They're also easier to finance.

Most of all, buying a used log home rewards impatience. And you don't need a general contractor.

ASK THE EDITOR

How difficult is a log home to decorate?

The challenge is that the space is so different from ordinary homes. Log walls are not a neutral element. They impose color and texture. Also, the rooms are usually bigger than people are accustomed to, especially in terms of volume. Finally, there's the issue of which interior styles suit a log home and which don't.

The secret of successful log-home decor is to choose a look that reflects your personality and lifestyle. You'll never feel comfortable in a home that is out of character with how you live. So the first step is to identify exactly what you aspire to. Fortunately, visual references abound. Magazines, websites, houses you've lived in and visited — all these provide a reference point for you to select from to assemble your own, unique look.

Got a question you need answered? Ask away!

Roland

ROLAND SWEET

Editor-in-Chief

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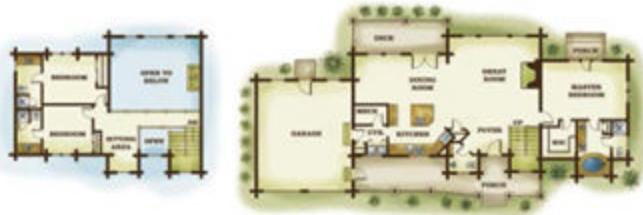
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Plain and Simple. Of all the adjectives used to describe log cabins, the most commonly heard is unpretentious. Folks express delight at spending time in a home where they can be truly themselves.



Log cabins are as much about mood as they are structure or size. Their charm and coziness make all who enter feel instantly welcome. And they indulge any decor, including whimsical and eccentric. Here's a sampling of cabin styles and settings to inspire your own cabin dream.



James Ray Stahn photos



The Venerable Cabin in the Woods. Rugged and rustic are the perfect words to define cabins, both how they look and how they're furnished. Many are outfitted with pieces fashioned from twigs and branches — the parts of trees left over from crafting the logs. As bare bones as they look, they still appear invitingly comfortable, especially when positioned in a cozy nook (opposite) or before a roaring fire (above). Even when approached from the outside (left), their sit-a-spell porch beckons with a promise of hospitality.

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Katahdin Cedar Log Homes photos



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Cabins promote closeness, but that doesn't mean cramped. Even the smallest cabins can enjoy openness that makes the most of the space available, whether it's a great room (opposite), a roomy deck and cozy porch (left) or an inviting guest room (above left). And yet, even a sizable cabin sets aside space for meditative moments, needing only a simple bench and a few potted plants (above).

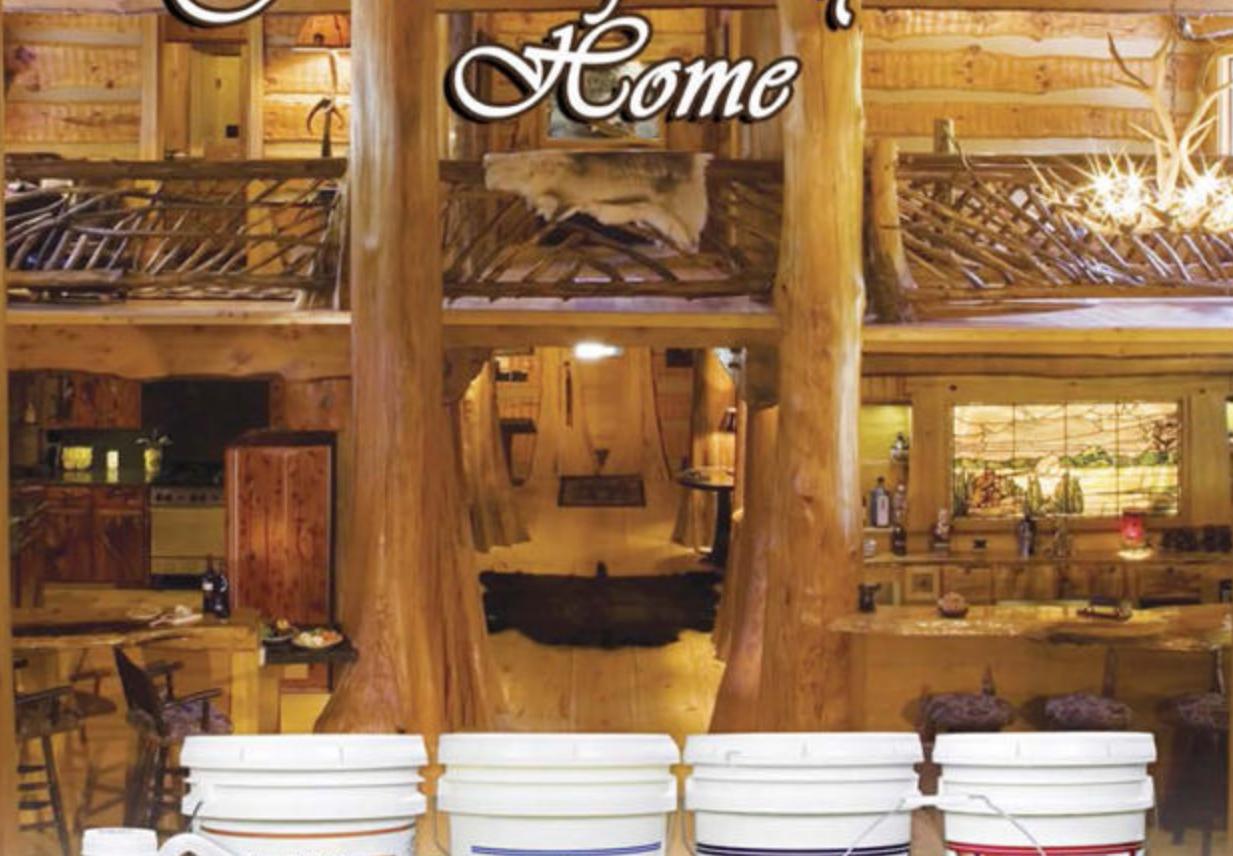
Log Style Is Immortal.

The first log cabins used small round logs and became the model for subsequent generations of cabin dwellers, but some folks preferred a refined look that signified permanence. Thus the hand-hewn cabin took hold.



James Ray/Splain photo

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Shades of the Ponderosa. Cowboys loved cabins, which is why they're part of the dude ranch experience (even city slicker Teddy Roosevelt built one in the Dakota Badlands). Because cabins can be small, they often rely on quick outdoor access.



Christopher Manora photo



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James Ray Spain photo



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The Maine Event

A Carolina couple continue
their love affair with logs.

Some people consider owning a log home a lifetime achievement. Doug and Mimi O'Neill regard log homes as a way of life. Doug lived in one in North Carolina and another in South Carolina, where he

met Mimi. Whenever they went skiing, they stayed in log homes. "It's an adventure living in a log home," Mimi explains, "Maybe it's because of the romance and the allure. It's almost like you're living back where your ancestors did."

story by ROLAND SWEET photos by BRIAN FITZGERALD

RIGHT: A sturdy speakeasy door, crafted by a woodworker the O'Neills knew from North Carolina, anchors a rustic setting on the front porch. The couple bought the flanking light fixtures online.





ABOVE: A mix of new and old furniture sets a casual mood in the great room. The truss chord is perfect for displaying mementos. Hickory flooring is used throughout the home.

OPPOSITE: Black cabinets, rubbed with red undertones, coordinate with river rock granite countertops, a copper apron sink and fixtures to add a rustic touch to the kitchen.

Then they moved to North Carolina and, naturally, built another log home. "We got married in the garden and had the reception inside," Mimi recalls.

They didn't stay long, however. Their honeymoon took them to Maine, which they fell in love with. They came home, put their house on the market, bought five wooded acres overlooking a cove of Sebago Lake and

made plans to build — what else — another log home.

They returned to Maine to begin the process, starting with Aaron Dunn, whose Big Twig Homes represents Katahdin Cedar Log Homes. Dunn referred them to several contractors and helped them choose a design. The couple had definite ideas about features that would suit them best and chose Katahdin's Bonanza model

as a starting point. "I totally changed it," Mimi admits. "I wanted to make the plan totally mine."

The O'Neills reduced overall size, moved some walls, changed a full bath to a powder room, added a turret with a raised ceiling and moved the dining area from in front of the foyer to an open area between the living room and the turret. The changes resulted in a home



RIGHT: A clawfoot tub fits snugly in a niche in the master bathroom. Mimi asked one of the finish carpenters to install the corner shelves, which reach almost to the rugged ceiling beams.

whose main floor measures 1,860 square feet and the two-bedroom loft 1,240 square feet.

The couple's desire to move to Maine didn't blind them to the reality that Down East winters can be harsh. They knew logs are good insulators but wanted extra assurance of comfort. They got it with Katahdin's wall-and-roof insulation system, which boosts homes' R-value by supplementing the natural insulation of its northern white cedar logs. It allows for whole-log construction by adding insulation to the inner side of the D-shaped logs and then sealing the space with tongue-and-groove boards that mimic the interior look of the D logs. "The O'Neills owned a log home before, and it did not have the insulation system," Dunn says. "After the first winter, they told me that they were very happy and noticed a huge difference in comfort and cost."

Construction began while the O'Neills were still in North Carolina. There were bumps along the road. Mimi recalls visiting the site after the basement had been excavated and being surprised to find it was 12 feet deep. The excavator had dug too deep and couldn't backfill, so they ended up with a basement with a 12-foot ceiling. About halfway through the project, they discovered that work they thought was being done wasn't. "One of the contractors was out robbing banks instead of working on the house," Mimi says. "We saw him on the national news when he was arrested and were blown away. We said, 'That's our contractor!'"

Dunn helped them find new builders, who had to re-do and undo some of the previous work, so the project took longer and cost more than they'd expected. That experience prompted them to move to Maine then and there and rent a place so they could monitor construction more closely. They visited the site twice a day, every day. At one point, Doug took over



1



2

floor plan





HOME DETAILS

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as the general contractor to keep the ball rolling. "We lost quite a lot of money. It was quite a mess, but it ended up getting done, and that was the key point," Mimi says. "We love the house. You can sit in your great room and look at your logs and every time see something different in them."

It took a year to reach the point where they could move in. "Then we hired a couple of guys to finish the interior the way we wanted it, like the turret ceiling and staircase," Doug recalls. "That took about three months."

Furnishing the home was a rewarding experience. The O'Neills brought

some items from their North Carolina home and supplemented them with heirlooms and new pieces. They also provided plenty of storage space by enclosing odd-sized and out-of-the-way spots. "There's so much storage space, some of it remained empty," Mimi notes.

After living in their home for six years, Doug and Mimi, fed up with high taxes, got the urge to move, this time to Montana. "It must be the gypsy in me," Mimi says of their wanderlust. They put their home on the market just when the housing market tanked. "We had to lower our asking price, and people would

offer half that," Mimi says. "We stood our ground, so it took a while to sell it." Finally, a delighted couple from Portland, Maine, 45 minutes away, bought it to use as a second home.

The O'Neills recall their years in Maine fondly. "It was very hard to leave," Mimi says. They're living in a cedar home that has log accents but have looked at several full-log homes. Nothing has suited them yet, but they're confident they'll find one eventually because log homes are such a big part of who they are, Mimi explains, noting, "I can't imagine living in anything else." 

ABOVE: The fireplace features lava rock behind the firebox bricks to radiate heat into the open great room of this highly energy-efficient home. The original plan had a wall enclosing the stairs, but the owners nixed it and added railings.

OPPOSITE: The O'Neills used a standard floor plan as the starting point for their design. The sloping site, 200 feet from the water, allows for a walk-out basement with 12-foot ceilings. A much-used hot tub graces the rear deck.

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FLOOR PLANS

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Jean & Rod



Tom & Amy



Wayne & Kim

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LIVING LARGE

The Smiths want a compact plan for a rustic home that makes the most of every square foot — and a big front porch.

40

REFINED RUSTIC

The Thompsons dream of recapturing the look and feel of a North Carolina country inn where they honeymooned.

42

OPEN LAYOUT

The New Hampshire couple has seven acres with mountain views and hopes to take advantage of the southern exposure.

PLUS: A 12-page gallery of popular floor plans

A Compact Home That Lives Large

The Smiths have big plans for their property in central Utah, but they're starting small – with a guesthouse. "We wanted to make the smaller footprint work for us by utilizing every square foot because we plan to live here for a year or two while we build the main house," Jean says.

Why a wood home: Building near Spring City, an area steeped in pioneer tradition, the Smiths wanted a rustic look with reclaimed wood and local stone. They decided to use thick, hand-hewn log siding on both the exterior and interior of the home to create the look of solid log walls.

Most important features: Space for a large table for family meals was a necessity – Rod and Jean have five grown children, three of whom are married. "The large front porch was important because of the gorgeous view," Jean says, "and it will act as a second family room in the summer."

PLAN SPECS

Square Footage: 1,825
Bedrooms: 3 **Baths:** 2



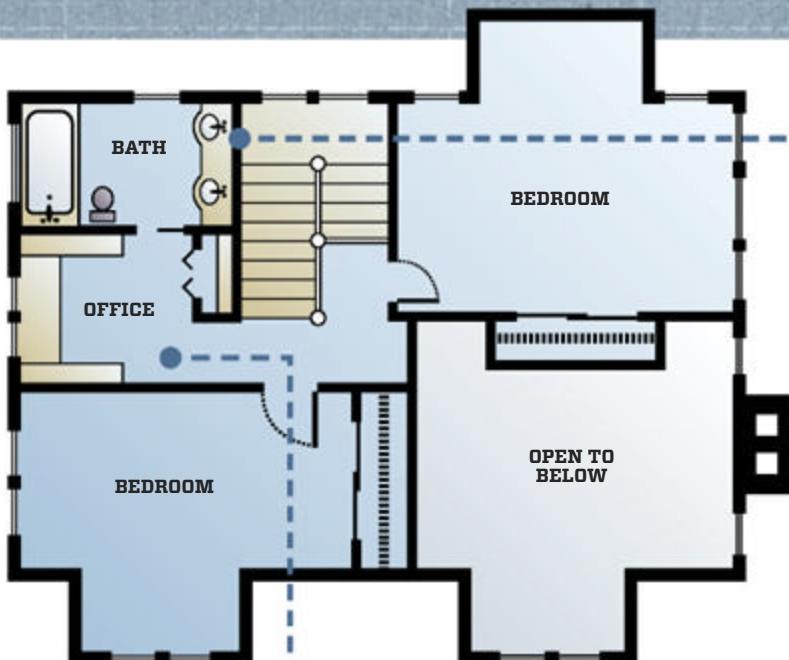
Jean & Rod

The Inside Scoop

With their location near a creek that can rise when the snow melts, the Smiths' site is part of a floodplain, Pieper notes. Careful planning was needed to account for the possibility of a flood during the home's lifetime. If you're facing the same situation, consider:

- **RELEVANT CODES AND STANDARDS.** Be sure your designer and builder understand any special codes that apply to your site and the need for special permits.
- **UTILITY PLACEMENT.** Place electrical boxes and wiring, furnaces, water heaters, washers and dryers well above the projected flood level.
- **RESOURCES.** Research information about safely building in a floodplain online. You'll find information, including flood insurance rate maps, on floodsmart.gov.





Upper Level

Guest bathroom has dual vanity for easy sharing.

Mud room suits an active family.

Upstairs seating area includes a built-in desk.



First floor master bedroom has dual closets and a seating area.

Alcove of windows makes the living room seem larger.

Roomy deck has space for seating and eating.

The Lowdown

Architect Ken Pieper fashioned a plan that includes several bump-outs, which he says give a small home more character and the feel of a larger space. These bump-outs can serve as window seats or accommodate a set of bunk beds — and they allow for additional windows to bring in natural light and views. The deck overlooks the mountains and the property's alfalfa fields.

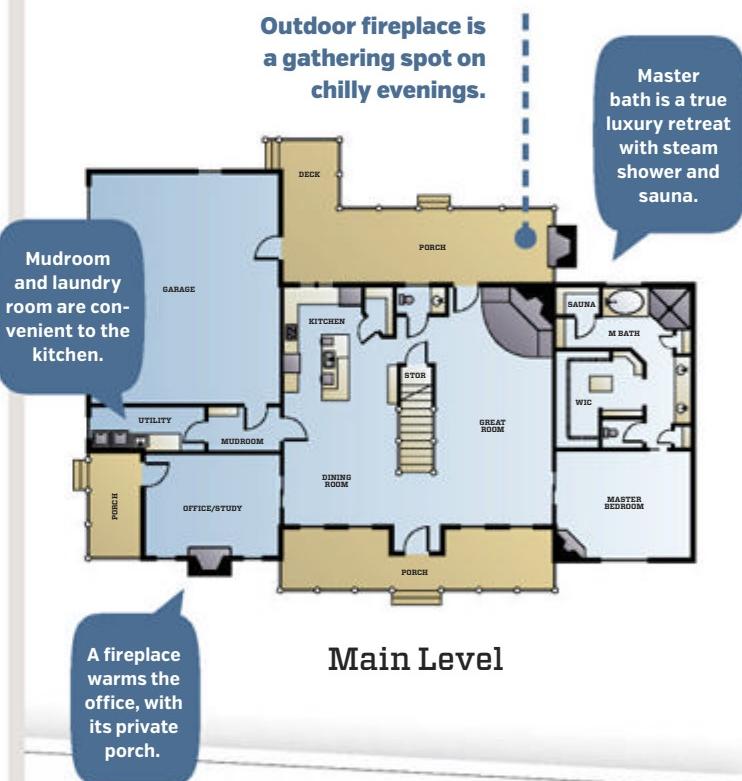
Inspired by a Romantic Getaway

When their 2013 honeymoon took Amy and Tom Thompson to the Swag Country Inn in the mountains of North Carolina, they were inspired to bring the inn's look and feel home. With a hilltop site on a farm that's been in Tom's family for generations, the couple had been mulling what type of home to build there. They realized the Swag's refined rustic style would be perfect.



Tom & Amy

Most important features: Amy and Tom want a comfortable home to welcome them after long workdays and accommodate small gatherings of family and close friends. In the main lodge at the Swag, there are vaulted spaces and areas with lower ceilings. They plan to incorporate that mix in their home, too. And they would like to replicate the luxury bath that was part of their honeymoon cabin.



The Inside Scoop

Designing a home from scratch is a new process for many would-be log-home owners. Designer Terry Reneau says working with logs adds a few extra factors to consider:

- **HOW WIDE?** Do you want full-log partition walls inside your home? Will they be wider than a typical stud-framed wall? Talk to your designer about how that will affect your floor plan.
- **MEASURING UP.** Be sure you and your designer are on the same page. If you're set on a 12-by-15-foot bedroom, for example, you're probably specifying inside measurements; your home designer may be working with outside measurements.
- **PLAN FOR SETTLEMENT.** Most log walls settle to some degree as the logs lose moisture and shrink. Your log designer will discuss how to accommodate this settling, especially in places where log walls meet conventional construction, as in the Thompsons' home.
- **STRETCHING IT.** Wide-open floor plans are popular, but very wide spans may require supporting posts in the middle of a space or more expensive work-arounds.

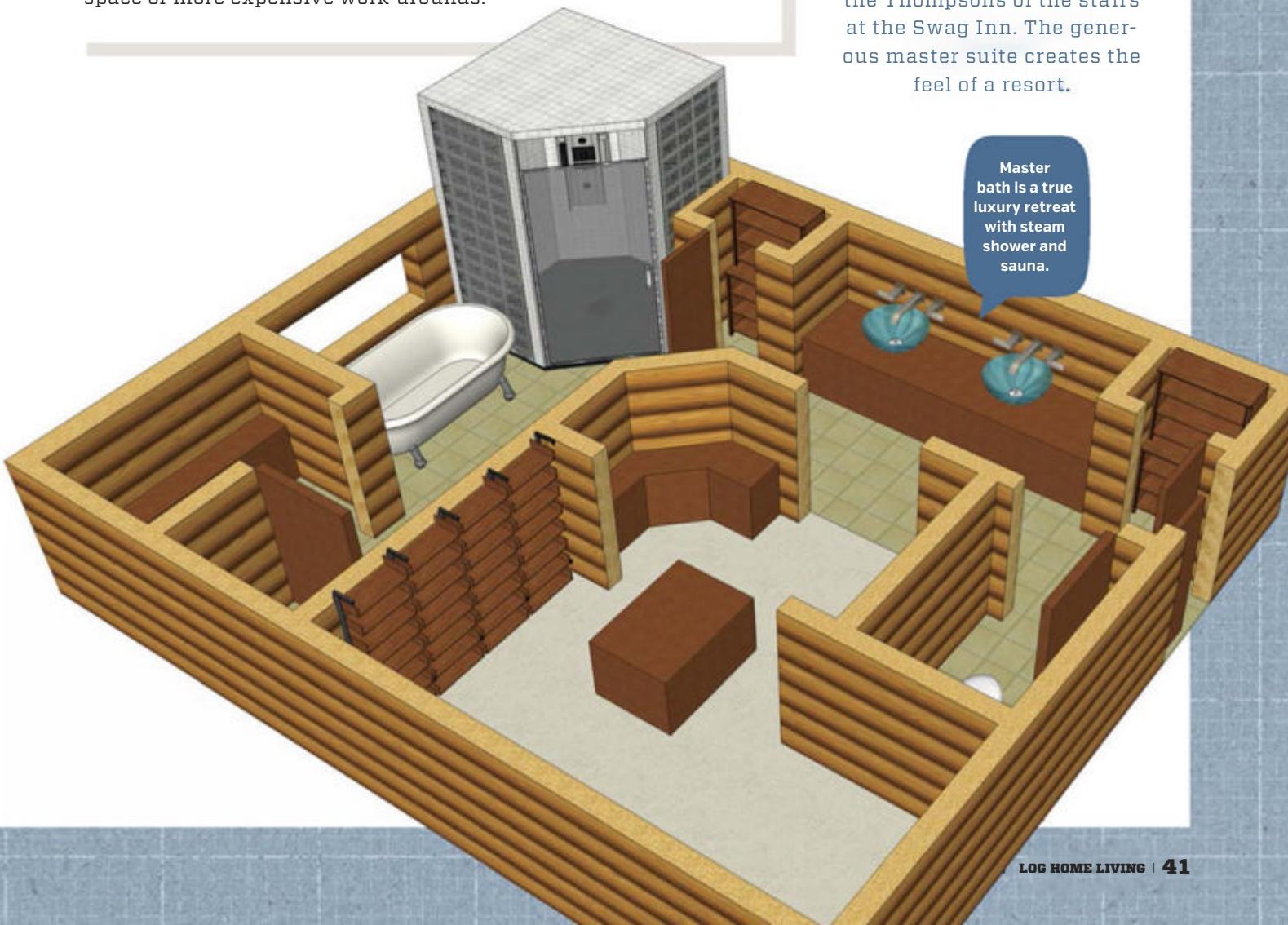
PLAN SPECS

Square Footage: 3,400

Bedrooms: 3 **Baths:** 2.5

The Lowdown

Terry Reneau of Hearthstone Homes suggested that the Thompsons use his company's Timberlake Collection hewn, dovetailed logs to create a timeless look in the home's center section. Wings on either side would use conventional construction. An eye-catching central staircase will remind the Thompsons of the stairs at the Swag Inn. The generous master suite creates the feel of a resort.



A Compact Home on a Secluded Site

With seven acres in rural New Hampshire, Kym Smith and Wayne Carpenter had plenty of space for her horses to graze. They soon realized it would also be a good place to build a home that would be just the right size for years to come.

Why a log home: "I've always dreamed of having a log home," Kym says. The couple is looking forward to a more energy-efficient home.

Most important features: "We wanted a lot of light with southern exposure," Kym says. They wanted to take advantage of their site's mountain view and create a comfortable open plan with a wood-burning stove and stone chimney.

PLAN SPECS

Square Footage: 1,100
Bedrooms: 2 **Baths:** 2

The Inside Scoop

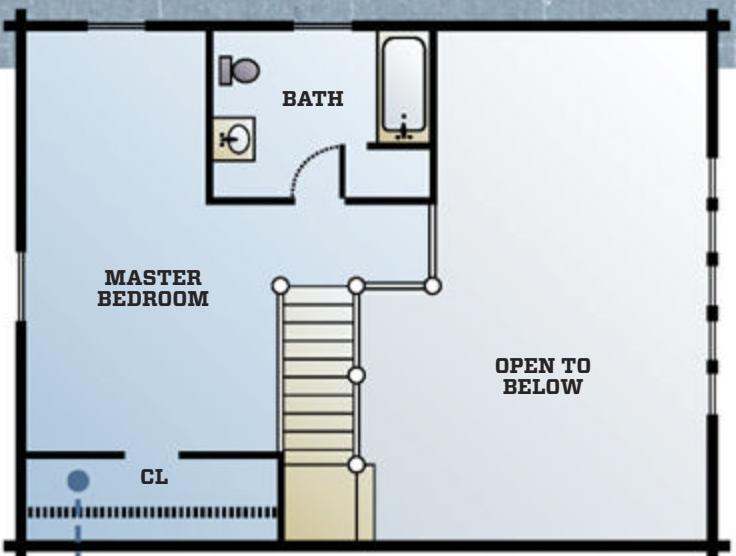
A walk-out level can provide lots of usable space – if you have the right site for it. Obviously, a sloped site makes creating a walk-out much easier, but it is possible to create a slope, Titorenko says. Here are a few other factors to consider if you're planning a walk-out level for your home:

- **WATCH FOR WATER.** Your lower level won't be comfortable living space if you can't keep it dry. Your builder or architect can review your site for obvious drainage issues. Sometimes, water problems will surface when a site is being cleared or excavated, Titorenko says.
- **GRAB THE LIGHT.** Natural light makes a walk-out space more pleasant. Ask your designer if you can include large windows or patio doors.
- **SLEEP SAFELY.** If you plan to put bedrooms on a lower level, remember that bedrooms should have a means of egress to the outdoors, such as a door or large window.
- **USE EVERY INCH.** Place utility rooms or storage spaces in the areas that don't have natural light.



Wayne & Kym

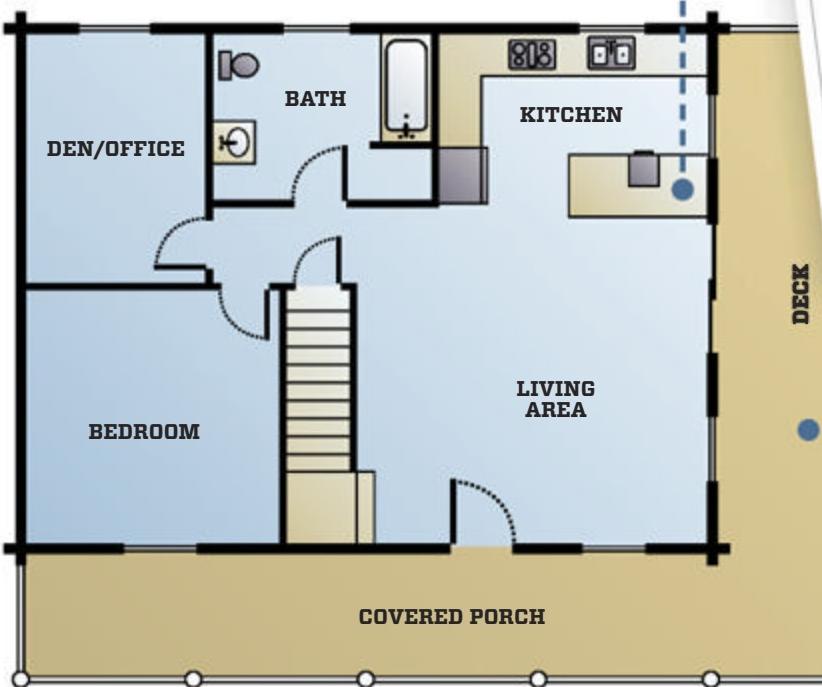




Upper Level

Large walk-in closet upstairs allows for much-needed storage space.

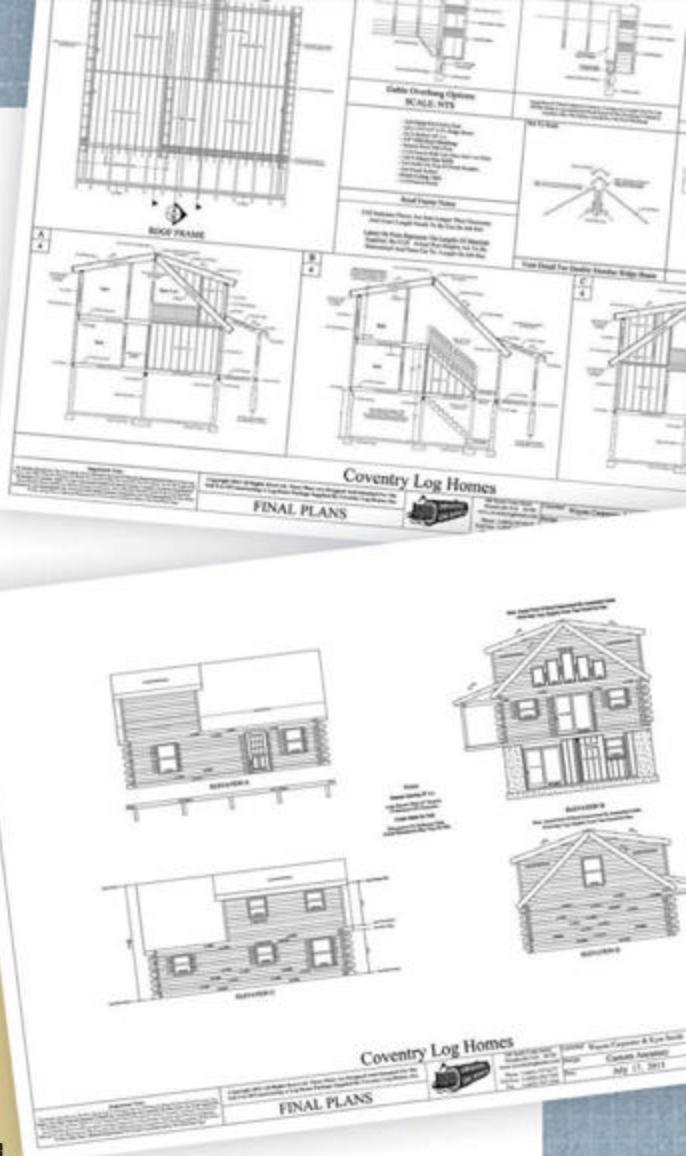
A peninsula separates the kitchen and dining areas.



Main Level

The Lowdown

Kym and Wayne worked with Richard Titorenko of Coventry Log Homes to revise one of the company's standard plans. They enlarged the kitchen and omitted an upstairs bedroom to make room for a large closet and larger bath. The sloped site allows for a walk-out level for the home, which the couple plans to finish in order to create a large living space perfect for entertaining.



A wide deck and long porch will allow Kym to sit and watch her horses graze.

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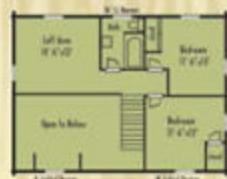
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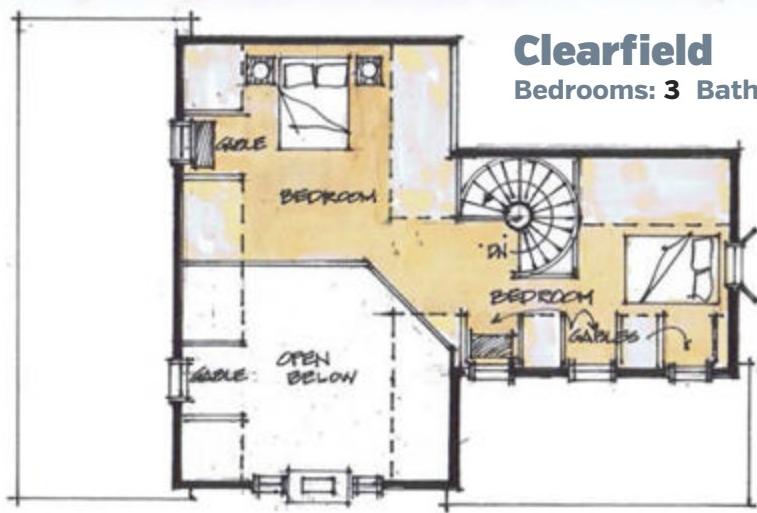
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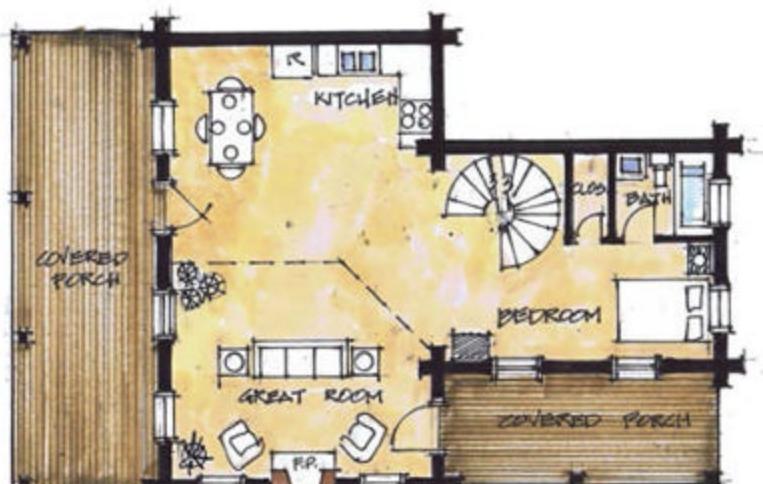
Alexander

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Bedrooms: 3 Baths: 1 Square Footage: 1,327



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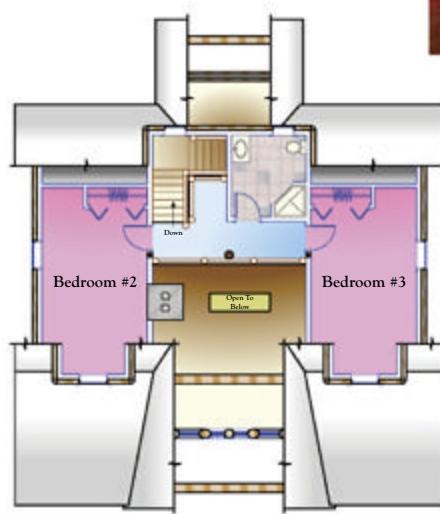
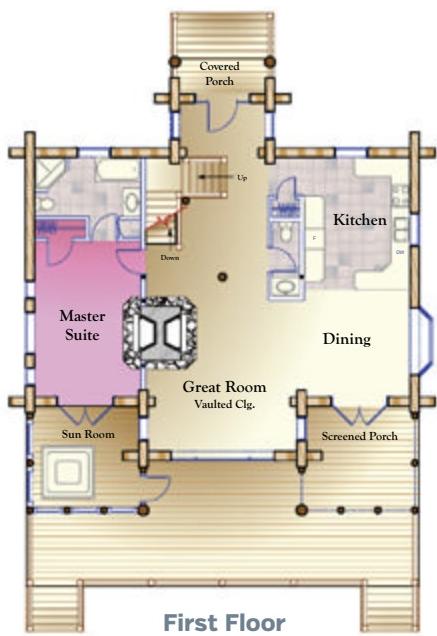
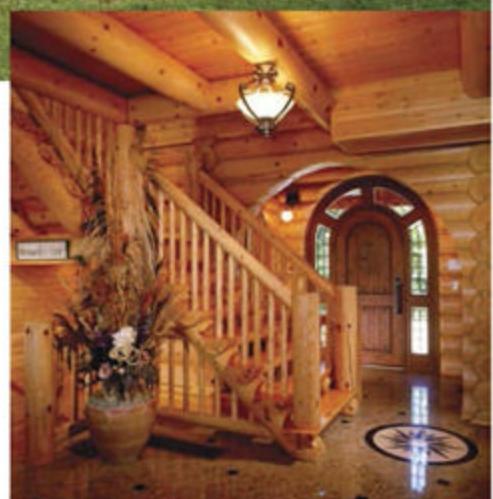
Norway Knight

Bedrooms: 3 Bath: 2 1/2 Square Footage: 2,201

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1st Floor



2nd Floor




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Baths: 2
Square Footage: 1,810
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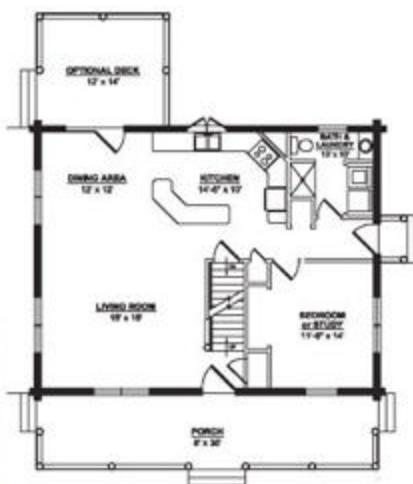


2nd Floor

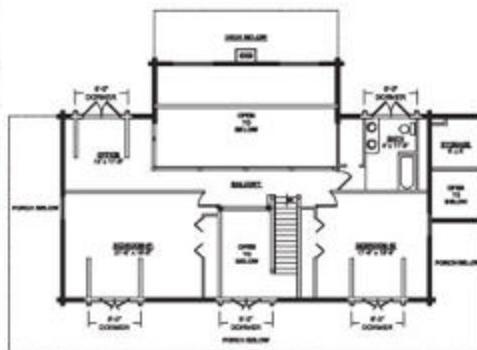
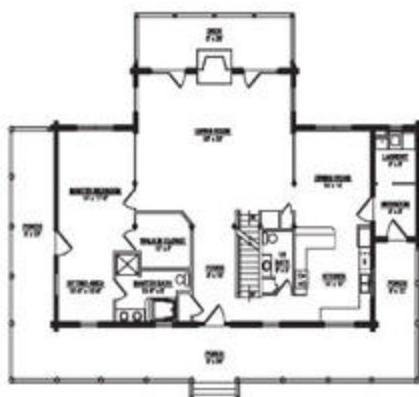


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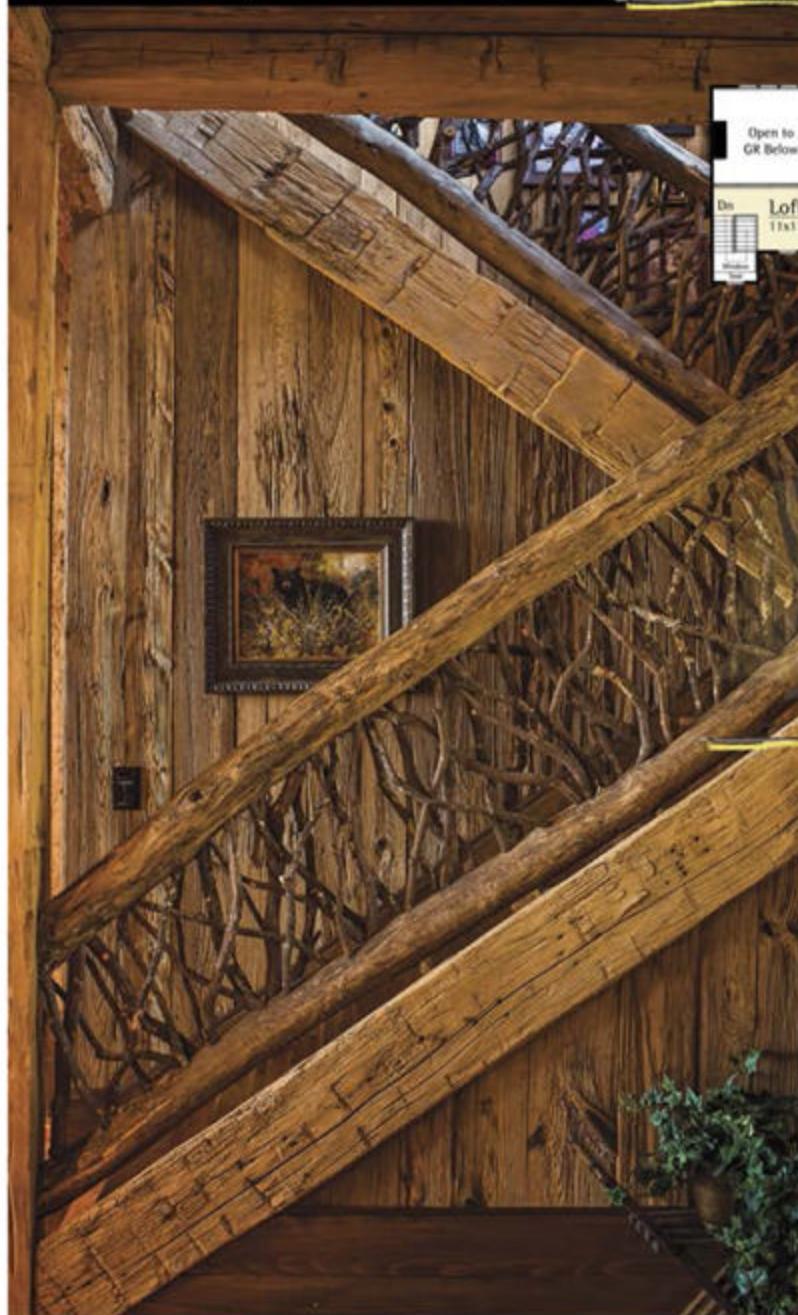


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The Lakefront II

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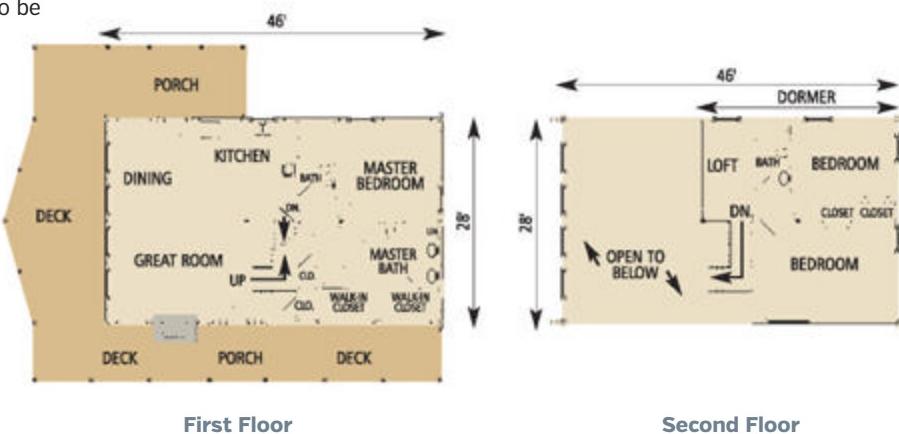
Bedrooms: 3

Baths: 2.5

Square Footage: 1,946

Package Price: Call for prices

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The Silverado

This 3 bedroom, 2 bath, award-winning cabin combines a unique twist of traditional and modern styles. Its design maximizes the use of space and allows for a private getaway in the master suite. A shed dormer covers the rear of the home allowing for plenty of headroom and additional natural light. Two gable dormers grace the front, not only adding floor space to the home but, giving the home the traditional cabin feel. The spacious wraparound porch gives plenty of outdoor living areas to enjoy. The "Silverado" received the "Cabin of the Year" award from Field & Stream Magazine. Available in Cedar, Cypress or Pine and a variety of log profiles this home will truly serve your family and friends every need.

Bedrooms: 3

Baths: 2

Square Footage: 2,184

Package Price: Call for prices

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An Owner's Manual



58

PLAN

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MAINTAIN

Good design provides physical and emotional satisfaction.

A realistic construction schedule can keep your log-home project on track.

Buying a used log home doesn't mean furnishing it from scratch.

Four problems to watch out for when buying a used log home.



JK Lawrence photo

A SENSE OF INNER SPACE

Good design provides physical and emotional satisfaction. **By Michael Grant**

Good design isn't always instantly recognizable. You are more likely to feel it as a sensory response to logical, well-thought-out solutions. Good residential design blends physical and emotional cues to create a house with soul. Size does not matter. It is about scale, detail and pattern. Today, our homes express who we are, what we value and how we live. To get there, establish relationships between space, light and line.

FOCUS ATTENTION. When you enter a room and your field of vision extends

beyond what you expected, you experience depth and spaciousness. The room is more than four walls. By aligning walls, windows, doorways and columns, you establish a visual axis. Unless you create a focal point, however, your eyes will wander. This focal point offers eyes a resting place. The classic example is a fireplace. It can also be artwork, an unusual window or a lighting fixture. For a focal point to work, the room needs a sense of balance or symmetry. The focal point will occupy the middle of the space. It can be framed by furniture, walls, windows, light or doorways.

Focal points are the hallmark of good design – the more the merrier. They establish visual reference points that help organize space. Fireplaces and windows are good examples.

WINDOW PLACEMENT. An underestimated architectural feature is fenestration – the order and placement of windows and doors. This one detail will make or break the curb appeal or comfort of a house. It will define the architectural style, the pattern of light and the sense of order in a room. When a window occupies a wall, it should balance the space, allow for furniture and provide illumination.

Windows also provide transparency. This is more than seeing into the space beyond. It liberates the space, brings the outdoors in, and allows you to experi-



LOG-HOME SITE LOCATION FAQs

Important considerations for where a log home can be built.

www.loghome.com/log-home-site-location-faqs/

ence the changes of daylight, weather, the seasons and landscapes. A room without a window is a cell. A room of windows becomes a gallery.

SHAPED SPACES. Remember how you experienced your grandparents' house, with its sloped ceilings, irregular spaces, nooks and crannies? Houses built generations ago used all of the space for living. Today, too often, rooms are no more than drywall boxes — no interest or character. Fortunately, log homes often have vaulted ceilings and large and small rooms. The interplay of spaces makes the house more dynamic. When you step from a small foyer into an expansive great room, you experience space with interest and surprise.

These shaped spaces enhance your sensory experience. Add wonder by making second-floor bedrooms open to the underside of the sloped roof. Dormers add light and height. Again, you create shaped spaces that are usable and exciting.

Shaped spaces may also accentuate architectural style. Gabled or shed

dormers will suggest a particular architecture. When you add exposed timbers that carry the weight of the roof, the room gains appeal as you anticipate the utility of the structure. A shaped space may be subtle and intimate, as a box bay window that is used as a reading nook with great light. Barrel-vaulted ceilings, tray ceilings, rounded banisters, art alcoves or openings in walls between rooms also shape spaces by adding light, depth and interest.

STAIRCASES. Your home doesn't need to be a castle to have an enticing staircase. Using materials in artistic ways to open floors up and down makes the space much more interesting. Adding landings makes stairs more comfortable to use. A bench on the landing invites you take a break. Windows in the stairwell provide light. The staircase can be straight, spiral, switchback or L-shaped. If the space, craftsmanship, materials and light are thought out, you will have good design.

FINISHING TOUCHES. The way details

are executed fulfills design. A good look doesn't require expensive materials but does need excellent craftsmanship. This is the fit of one material joining another, whether physical or spatial. Details also define the style of the home. A Craftsman bungalow has distinct trim details that are simple and elegant. Each style will have its own architectural appeal.

At its most functional level, good design solves problems. Room relationships are designed for your convenience. Doors swing in the right direction. Storage is sufficient. You can entertain friends and family or relax in your private space.

Good design will also conserve energy, reduce maintenance and provide lifestyle considerations as you age. Good design doesn't sacrifice utility for aesthetics. Ultimately, it represents who you are, what you value and how you live. **U**

Michael Grant designs and builds homes for Modern Rustic Homes (modernrustichomes.com).

NOOKS & CRANNIES

FROM LEFT: James Ray Spain photo [2]; JK Lawrence photo



Lofts, a feature of many log homes, are especially handy for hideaways, whether open or closed off.



Dormers and bump-outs create extra room that can be put to good use; even better if they include a window.



Window seats, common in bygone days, have remained popular in log homes, particularly in bedrooms.

Ask Professor Rob

I need more space than my budget will allow. Is there a way to lower the cost of adding square footage?

A: Adding square footage won't necessarily help your log home live larger. Making efficient use of the space you can afford is the best way to give your home a roomy feeling while keeping it comfortable and inviting. We often build homes with rooms for one purpose, which expands the overall size of the home. A multi-purpose floor plan with design flexibility cuts down on the number of rooms needed.

Great rooms, which combine the kitchen, living room and dining space, are a good example. Because log homes are constructed in such a way that the large beams or log posts bear loads that framed walls do in conventional construction, they offer a greater opportunity to have that open great room homeowners desire. This openness also allows for bonus functional spaces without needing extra square footage.

But think beyond the great room. A sunroom can double as a bedroom, dining room or office area. A spare bedroom can double as an office or a media room. The bathroom or kitchen closet can house the laundry facilities. Bunkrooms can cut down on guest rooms, with one room for the girls and one for boys.

Think practically. But also be flexible and use your imagination. And don't hesitate to work with an experienced designer and builder to find ways to get the most for your building dollar. Good luck!

Rob Clutter conducts half-day University sessions at the Log & Timber Home Show and other locations. For a class schedule and to register, visit the website: thelogandtimberhomeshow.com

Got a question for Professor Rob?



E-MAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:

askrob@loghomeliving.com



Show & Tell

Log-home shows are an invaluable planning resource. The advantage is they feature lots of companies representing different styles, offering comparisons and the opportunity to ask questions in person. A disadvantage of shows is lots of companies representing different styles and ways of doing business. You risk information overload, especially if you're new to these homes.

To get the most from the shows, you should devise a plan. Here are five tips to help you get the most from a log-home show:

1 Write down questions – and answers. That'll help you keep companies straight after you've spoken with a dozen or more representatives.

2 Linger and listen to others. You may hear a question answered that you didn't think to ask.

3 Keep an open mind. You may think you know what kind of home you want, but you might discover something else you like better.

4 Take ideas wherever you find them. Even if a log style or company doesn't appeal to you, see what might work for you.

5 Attend informational workshops. These hour-long sessions are free and touch on important points aimed at helping you attain your dream.

The Log and Timber Home Show is also the setting for half-day Log and Timber Home University (mywoodhome.com/university). This concentrated session covers the basic information you need to succeed, presented in a step-by-step sequence from planning through construction.

JK Lawrence photo



Log-home shows offer a bazaar setting, where you can learn all you need to know – and more – about achieving your log-home goal.



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Nathan Winter photos



TIP

KEEP IT SIMPLE.

When weighing your wall style, consider the cost of fabrication, the speed of on-site construction and the maintenance that may be required over time. The complexity of the design and the size of your new home will significantly influence all three points. The more complex the home's design and the more intricate the cuts required for your logs, the more labor intensive – and therefore more expensive – it will be.



Cowboy Log Homes photo

STAY THE COURSE

A realistic construction schedule can keep your log-home project on track.

Building a log home happens fast on reality TV shows about “amazing” log homes, but that’s short-attention-span editing and time-lapse photography. Actual construction happens in slow-mo. It’s deceiving, though, because logs can be stacked in a matter of days. Since they’re the home’s most substantial material, people are misled into thinking the home is almost ready. Not even close. Given the vagaries of weather, scheduling and project complexity, a precise timeline is impossible to determine, but move-in could be six months to two

years away. The average is 11 months.

Unless you intend being involved in your home’s construction, details of the process needn’t concern you. Understanding it, however, will help you track its progress. Here are four ways to stay on top of things.

1 START WITH A TIMELINE. Keep track of the big picture by creating a construction schedule you can follow. It must be realistic. Talk with homeowners whose project was similar to yours and to builders who have experience with log-home construction.

Building a log home proceeds according to a carefully planned schedule that details the order of events so that you can tell at a glance what stage of the process you’re at.

A construction schedule should have the start time and duration of each activity. If you’re using a general contractor, the schedule may show only site preparation, foundation work, completion of dried-in shell and mechanical rough-ins, and finish work. If you’re acting as your own GC, then your schedule will have to include lots more detail. Under the heading “foundation,” for example, you might list excavation, forming or excavating footings, pouring footings, forming and pouring foundation walls, installing drain tile and insulation, waterproofing, backfilling and termite pre-treatment.



5 ESSENTIAL LOG-HOME BUILDING TIPS

Savvy builder Jim Cooper advises how to ensure a hassle-free project.

www.loghome.com/5-essential-building-tips-from-a-pro/

A Gantt Chart is a great tool for tracking projects. Activities are listed in sequence down the left side; dates from beginning to end are listed across the top. The time required for each activity is shown as a horizontal bar on the appropriate line at the proper date and location. You can create your own Gantt Chart or download one free for Microsoft Excel at <http://bit.ly/1yOOScf>.

Work either forward or backward and consider critical-path items on your checklist — tasks that must be completed before moving on to the next step. For example, foundation walls must be erected before the subfloor can be installed. Before foundation walls can be built, footings must be poured. Before these steps, the site must be excavated for the footings and foundation. Once you've figured out critical-path items, then fill in the less critical items (septic system, HVAC, gutters, etc.), plugging them in at the earliest possible date they can be completed.

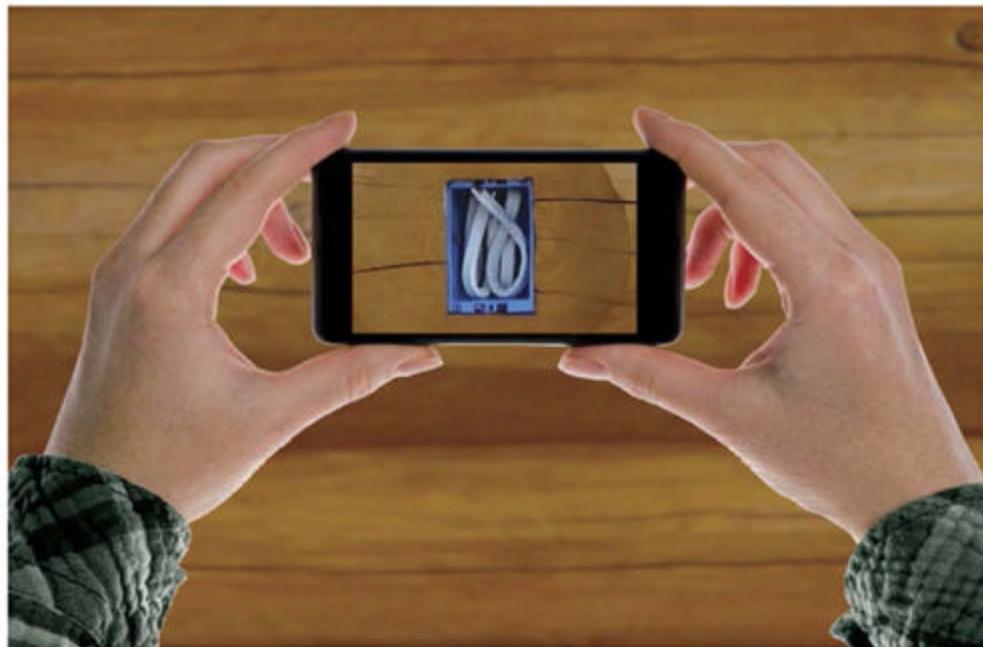
2 ANTICIPATE THE SEQUENCE. Take these steps in the 60 days leading up to the delivery of your log-home materials package. Start with an all-weather road to your building site that can handle large trucks delivering your logs and other construction materials. With the road in place, you or your builder can clear the site. Get rid of stumps and debris, and make the site as clean as possible so there's plenty of room to store building materials. Make sure the well and septic locations are marked so they don't become parking or storage areas.

The sooner electricity and phone service are available on your job site (remote locations, especially in the mountains, may not be well served by cell service), the better. Your builder might ask about setting a temporary electric pole to hold the service panel until your house is under roof. It's a legitimate request, as work will proceed much faster if power is available.

3 KEEP YOUR CONTRACTOR ON SCHEDULE. Some construction delays are unavoidable, but good contractors have a Plan B to avoid many of them. These include alternate suppliers and subcontractors in case the main sources are delayed or unavailable. Ask what your contractor's backup plans are before the project gets under way.

4 AVOID CHANGES ONCE CONSTRUCTION BEGINS. Besides costing extra money, the extra work can wreak havoc on a construction schedule.

These measures don't guarantee your project will finish on time or even sooner. Good scheduling will, however, clearly map the process to help you pinpoint delays, remedy their causes and make necessary adjustments to keep the remainder of the project on track. **■**



Cowboy Log Homes/fotolia.com/igor photo

TIP

TAKE INSTANT PICTURES

If you have a smart phone or tablet, it has a camera. Use it or a dedicated digital camera to record construction progress and details that will be hidden when the work is complete. Having this permanent record of what's where will help when you have to make repairs or want to remodel.

Build a Better Log Home

Think ahead before breaking ground. Here are four tips to avoid costly mistakes.

1 PROPERLY ORIENT YOUR HOME ON YOUR BUILDING LOT.

Consider not only how each room takes in views, but also the sun's path and prevailing winds. Also, make sure the location of your well and septic system doesn't prevent you from making home improvements. If you wish later on to put an addition onto the building, for example, you may not be able to because the well and septic locations block the way.

2 KEEP ALL THE TREES YOU CAN.

Trees can provide shade and a whole lot more. Deciduous trees to the south will shield your home in the summer and, once they lose their leaves, expose more sun during winter's shorter days. A south exposure can be wonderful in northern climes, where homes can use extra sunlight during cold winters. A windbreak of pine trees can shield a home from driving winds, especially important if your home sits on a mountaintop or ridge.

3 CONSIDER WINDOW PLACEMENT.

Though windows let in light and provide view opportunities, they can also rob your home of energy because they replace a log wall's natural insulation with glass, which has less insulation than solid wood. On the other hand, a wall of windows that constantly faces the sun can bring in too much heat.

4 INCORPORATE DORMERS INTO YOUR DESIGN.

Adding dormers can increase space in upstairs rooms, especially in homes with shallow roof pitches. Be sure you weatherproof your dormers with adequate flashing and design them to divert water away from the structure. Log dormers are difficult to maintain. The log corners can easily trap and retain water and snow against the log work, keeping it constantly saturated. Using a framed dormer with siding is safer than whole-log construction. Shingles, board and batten, and clapboard are great dormer materials that add more interest and added texture to the home's character. But keep in mind that homes with many corners and roof angles increase energy demands and create more possibilities of ice damming or roof leaks than do roof systems with more straight lines.



Show Trees Some Love

The joy of building on property with mature trees is diminished if a significant number of these trees are lost during and after construction. The Arbor Day Foundation advises increasing their chances of survival by being aware of how trees grow, especially under the ground. Then, by marking and protecting trees during construction, you'll enjoy beautiful, healthy trees in the years after.

Design to save trees. Carefully site buildings, roads and driveways, utility lines and other features so that they avoid the trees you most want to save. Follow these steps:

- On a plat of your property, show the location of trees that matter most to you.
- Consider these trees in deciding the location of the house, garage, driveway, walks, patio and other features.
- Stake out the location of these improvements to give you a better idea how they will affect the trees when they are built. Sometimes changing the angle of a building or curving a walk can preserve the root space of a prized tree.

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Protect trees during construction. Cutting into the tree's roots, compacting the soil over roots, or changing the ground level around a tree during construction are three of the most common causes of tree damage or death.

■ **Mark and fence trees.** Be sure trees are clearly marked and your desires are clearly communicated to contractors. Build temporary fences of brightly colored or flagged material so that construction workers can clearly see zones from which equipment must be kept clear.

■ **Protect trees.** Modern construction equipment can quickly damage tree bark or compact soil to the point where your prized trees' roots are starved of oxygen and moisture. Make sure that no equipment operates within the drip lines [edges of the canopy] of trees you wish to save.

Keep ground around trees on the level. Lowering the grade can sever roots.

■ A stone well can help keep soil near the trunk at the original level. For fill beyond the well, use only light, porous, gravelly soil out to the tree's drip line, never exceeding 6 inches in depth.

■ A tree's roots can extend far beyond the limits of its canopy. If a change in grade is necessary, build a retaining wall at a distance where you can save as many of the roots as possible.

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OLD IS GOLD

Buying a used log home doesn't mean furnishing it from scratch. By Joyce Standridge

Discounting cost, the easiest thing for a potential log-home owner to do when building from scratch is plan living space. Not enough room for what you want? Change dimensions, bump out a wall, add a room above the garage, move visitors to a guest wing.

But how many of us who are lusting for logs can truly discount cost? Maybe the smartest thing we can do is back up a truck to the door, load our accumulated treasures, and move on down the road to love logs that were once somebody else's scratch plan. Used log homes are increasingly on the market.

It's new log homes that are lacking. According to the Department of

Housing and Urban Development, in recent years somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 percent of home sales were new construction of all types. But as Ron Silliboy of Ward Cedar Log Homes observed in his recent blog, of the nearly 1 million times ground was broken last year to build new homes, fewer than 25,000 were log homes. There has been a real contraction in business (and not just in the log world), which has resulted in new business models that have caused manufacturer and consumer alike to take a fresh approach. It could easily be argued that it's also a smarter approach.

Log homes remain primarily upscale, but adopting and adapting existing homes has become increasingly

Used furniture goes well, even in new homes, with coordinating touches, such as these cowhide sofa throws.

attractive. Manufacturers are offering packages for additions, expanded services for architectural adjustments and lots of cost-free suggestions for how to maximize the log-home investment.

Increasingly, new log-home owners are also turning away from a totally clean slate in furnishing and accessorizing, and making a fresh appraisal of what can be not only salvaged, but also enhanced in the new setting. With so many designers and home-furnishing entities pushing the mid-century and Swedish-modern style, with its hard edges and surfaces, blindingly shiny finishes and — let's face it — cold lack of color, it's harder to find new things that are a better and more natural fit with logs.

Instead of replacing larger pieces, consider recovering upholstery and refinishing wood. Homeowners coming from stick-built living often have some well-built pieces that will transition beautifully into a log setting with just a little cosmetic update.

The best news about purchasing

an existing log home is how well ideas developed for other settings will become equally or even more striking when integrated with log. "Timeless" is a word worn well when teamed with log, and the same can be said for the kind of well-loved styles that show best inside log homes.

So, all that "new" stuff (that's really just stolen from our parents' generations) can be sidelined as it becomes old yet again. Hug your best furniture and promise it a facelift if it makes you happy, but welcome to the Judgment-Free Zone that is log-home living. □

ESSENTIAL FURNITURE

Even if you're moving into a used log home and intend keeping your old furniture, you might consider buying two new pieces. They'll give the place a fresh feel, match the scale of your new home and anchor the remaining furniture that you're bringing with you.

**SOFA**

An overstuffed, leather sofa, ideally with at least one companion chair may seem like a cliche, but that's because it's a natural fit for a log home. Leather goes with wood. It isn't mandatory, however, so you can opt for upholstery. The important thing is to install a sofa with substance, perhaps a sectional. If you've blown your budget on the house and have no choice but to keep your old sofa, consider having it reupholstered.

**BED**

Most likely, whoever designed your log home, assuming it was this century and not the 19th, provided a roomy master suite. Maybe that's what clinched your decision to buy the place. Your new bedroom is destined to be your sanctuary, so why keep your old bed if it looks dwarfed in its new setting? Even if you keep your old mattress, at least treat yourself to a new frame. And if you don't already have a king-sized bed, get one.

**OTHER TOUCHES**

If your furniture looks too dainty for a log home, chances are you're not the kind of person who'll be moving into a log home in the first place. But if you are, that doesn't mean going whole-hog rustic. Maybe a contemporary country theme suits you. What you need are some establishing pieces and a few accessories that signal your "new-old" look and allow you to build around with items from your former home.

Cabin Starters

Cabin style is personal, but if you're searching for iconic cabin flair, include these four ingredients.



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2. ENAMELWARE COFFEE POT. A glass coating over a metal base gives the no-frills pots a glossy finish, makes them easy to clean and prevents corrosion of the metal. The oldest pieces were white or gray. Today, you'll find enamelware in solid colors, like blue or red, or with speckled finishes called "graniteware." Available on eBay or at antique shops, vintage pots may have nicks, rust spots and crazing (fine cracks) in the enamel. These signs of age just add character.

3. THE HUDSON'S BAY BLANKET. New World settlers traded wool blankets with natives. Designs became more varied as the fur trade progressed and eventually incorporated Native American symbols. The Chief blanket, recognizable by its black, yellow, red and green stripes on a white background, is still available.

4. CAMP STOVE. Early New World cabins had fireplaces, but by the mid-1800s, wood-burning stoves became popular. A stove forged from cast iron heated up quickly, and because it could sit out into a room, it radiated warmth in all directions. Most stoves offered a plate for cooking, as well. If you're a stickler for authenticity, pick a black cast-iron stove that burns wood. Antique stoves are available, as are reproduction models and more contemporary designs.

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INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Four problems to watch out for when buying a used log home. By Mercedes Hayes

There is little doubt that buying an existing log home will always be less expensive than building your own. Land prices can be sky-high, and construction costs are continually escalating. But when you are purchasing a log home, what is fixable and what is alarming? Here are four warning signs to look for.

1 INSECTS. Termites are the first thing buyers ask about. Log homes do not necessarily attract termites; those nasty critters love rot-

ten and damp wood, which should not describe a home you are buying. But yes, if the logs touch the ground, you could have a problem. Normally there should be at least 10 to 12 inches of foundation between the ground and the first course of logs. In the unlikely event you have a termite infestation, you should see pencil-sized mud tunnels running up the foundation.

Carpenter ants are another possible infestation. They don't eat wood but burrow honeycombed tunnels for their nests. If you see a little pile of sawdust, something is going on; carpenter

Buying a pre-loved log home can move you quickly to your goal of log-home living, but take plenty of time to inspect its condition, even if it's only a few years old.

ants or bees leave this telltale sign. Of course, a professional insect inspection is part of the home-buying process, and infestations are treatable.

2 ROT. This is usually caused by constant exposure to moisture. For instance, log homes more than 20 years old tended to be built with shallow overhangs. As a result, the lowest courses of logs get rained on, and even the corners are often dripped upon. These are the most likely places you will find rot (your home inspector will poke



Answered by Log Home Living's own editor, Roland Sweet.

www.loghome.com/log-home-maintenance-faqs/

the logs with a screwdriver to confirm it). Check for gutters and see if they are working properly. If rot has taken hold, there's not much you can do except replace the individual logs. Companies that specialize in corn blasting and re-staining will usually be equipped to perform this task, but it won't be cheap.

Inspect around the window and door frames; they could also be the first to show signs of rot. If the window itself is wood clad, it is not always easy to maintain. Are there storm windows? Or, if newer, how are the thermal seals holding up? A houseful of broken thermal seals can be very expensive to replace, and log homes can have more than the usual number of fixed windows.

Dormers are usually framed with log or wood siding. The edges where the siding meets the roof are another vulnerable area. If not flashed properly, the edges could start to show rot — an invitation to insects.

3 STAIN. Water should bead up if splashed on to a good coat of stain. But if the coating is shot, you can usually tell by looking at it. Is the stain splotchy? Can you see wood wearing through in places? Is it plain-old ratty looking? If the stain is worn but even, probably a new coat will serve. If it's been more than 10 or 15 years since the house was treated, you might be looking at corn-blasting the finish down to the raw wood and then re-staining. This work is incredibly expensive (I was quoted \$7,000 for just one wall), but you could use that fact as a bargaining chip with the seller.

4 HOLES. Carpenter bees love logs. They love exposed wood even more. They don't like stain, though, so a well-treated log home can be resistant. However, exposed ends seem to be the first surface they attack, as well as fascia boards (along the roof edges) and wooden soffits (underneath

the roof overhang). Look for perfect half-inch round holes. An occasional hole is inevitable, but if you spot a number of holes, you might have a problem; the bees leave long tunnels inside the wood. Carpenter bees are very difficult to treat, especially if the holes are unreachable.

If the log or fascia looks like something took a bite out of it (in other words, a big, irregular chunk is missing), this is probably woodpecker damage. Woodpeckers could be going after insects or larvae; sometimes they are just being territorial. These tenacious birds are difficult to discourage, and their damage is unsightly; a wood fill seems to be the likeliest fix.

Most other issues are the same as you will find in any house. A good home inspector should have no problem with a log home. If yours seems uneasy about it (this can happen), by all means find somebody else. □

DIY LOG CLEANING

When old logs need a good cleaning to remove worn finish, do-it-yourself homeowners have four options: pressure washing, media blasting, chemical stripping and sanding.

■ **Pressure washing** uses high-powered water jets to remove surface contaminants. Easy on the p.s.i., however, so you don't disrupt the wood surface.

■ **Media blasting** uses corncob grit, walnut shells, glass beads, baking

soda, dry ice or recycled crushed glass to abrade the finish off the wood. Crushed glass is very efficient, relatively inexpensive and does not impregnate the wood with organic material that can later mold.

■ **Chemical finish removers** don't dissolve finishes. They soften them. Use a pressure washer to remove the residue. Before buying any finish remover, test a sample on your existing finish to see how well it works.



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FROM GRUNGE TO GLORY

How to restore a neglected log home.

By Jim Renfroe

I have seen some pretty bad-looking log structures be transformed with a little effort, and so I know that it can be done. The restoration process consists of four basic elements:

- **Surface Preparation**
- **Preserving**
- **Staining**
- **Sealing**

All four steps are important, but surface preparation is the most involved, most critical and often the most overlooked. House logs need to be clean, bare and dry; otherwise, you will end up doing it all over again because the new finish didn't penetrate or adhere.

SURFACE PREPARATION AND STRIPPING.

Four circumstances dictate when stripping is necessary: When there is any type of film or coating on the wood, when there's a build up of old finishes, when there is any area of the house where the old finish is peeling or cracking, and when there is a glossy finish on the house. If, however, the house has had penetrating finishes applied to it, or it has never had anything applied to it or if a gentle breeze blows bits of the finish away, you can skip the stripping process and pressure-wash instead.

Bleach and water with a little detergent has been a long-

standing recommendation for cleaning dirty wood. It works well, it's fast and it's cheap. However, there are a few drawbacks. One, bleach can destroy the cellulose in the wood when left on the surface too long. Two, bleach inhibits the wood's ability to hold a finish. Three, while the wood will get significantly cleaner, it often still looks gray or an unnatural washed-out color. Four, homemade bleach solutions are difficult to completely rinse from the wood.

Household bleach only remains active for about 15 minutes once it's mixed with water, so you have to use it quickly. Also, when spraying bleach on a wall, start from the bottom and work your way up. This will minimize streaks, which are difficult to remove.

PREPARED CLEANING

SOLUTIONS. When you buy a prepared wood solution, look for the active ingredient sodium percarbonate, sodium hypochlorite or calcium hypochlorite. These are all bleaches. However, most store-bought products contain buffers to ease the wood damage and surfactants to help wet the wood quicker and allow it to rinse off easier.

If wood is just discolored and has no significant areas of mildew, look for a wood cleaner containing



oxalic acid. This mild acid restores much of the wood's original color. Oxalic acid-based wood cleaners will also remove gray weathered stains, metal or nail stains, as well as water stains.

PRESSURE WASHING.

Pressure washing is a very efficient way to rinse off a stripper or wood cleaner. However, you must exercise extreme caution when using a pressure washer or you will cause damage to the logs and possibly force water through the logs to the inside of the home.

PRESERVING.

The best preservatives for house logs are borates. They are less toxic to humans than table salt and poison the wood as a food supply to just about every wood-destroying organism known, including decay fungi, beetles and termites. However, the wood needs some moisture to allow for proper diffusion, and you must apply and maintain a water-repellent finish over borate-treated wood to keep the borates from leaching out. Given these few limitations, borates become very inexpensive insurance against a host of problems.



Perma-Chink Systems photo

WOOD FINISHES. There are several hundred types of wood finishes supposed to protect against organic growth, water absorption and UV damage. A common denominator is the solids content. Solids can be defined as active ingredients or what's left in and on the wood after the finish dries: resins, binders, pigments, fungicides, etc. A high-quality wood finish will contain at least 30 percent solids, and the better ones contain over 60 percent. A higher quality finish will look good and protect the wood for four to five years between coats.

SEALANTS. The last thing to do is to seal areas that allow air and water transmission. The most obvious places will be where water seeped in during the cleaning process. Other areas where leaks often occur are

in the corner notches, around doors and windows, and at the top of the walls. These should all be sealed from the outside, not the inside, using a properly applied high-quality caulk or chinking.

In conclusion, if you've just purchased a log home that's a few years old, then restoration should only have to happen once. Wood can last indefinitely with proper care and periodic maintenance. Taking care of the wood you own is an investment, not an expense. And it's smart money.

Jim Renfroe has spent more than 35 years in the wood preservation and restoration business and is the author of The Log Home Owner's Manual. His company, Wood Care Systems [ewoodcare.com, 800-827-3480], is located in Kirkland, Washington.



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Photo depicts a 10" cabin appearance kit.

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Foix Sideboard, from French Heritage's Pyrenees line, is made of mango wood with a malibu and slate gray finish, and star-and-hoop drawer pulls that enhance the rugged look. Measuring 61"x20"x35", the piece features two cabinet doors, two adjustable shelves and four roomy drawers. \$2,589, from One Kings Lane.

1



5



2



3



6



4



1. Sequoia center table, with walnut root veneer top and brass base with aged patina, 39.4" x 39.4" x 13.8", \$17,800;

2. Equipal Barrel Chair, handmade in Mexico from tanned pig skin and pine, with cedar strips, 33" x 25" x 23", \$418, from Indeed Decor; **3.** Twig Style Bed, by Fireside Lodge Furniture,

made from hand-peeled northern white cedar logs, single to California king, from \$999; **4.** Bear Paw Tray, from Black Forest Decor, made of

polyresin, 11.75" x 8" x 3.25", \$34.95; **5.**

Puddle Stool, from Don Howell Joinery, handcarved saddle seat, walnut, counter height, \$875 **6.** Bear Fireplace Screen, from Bear Creek Gifts, three panels, folds to 34" x 28" x 13.5", \$699.



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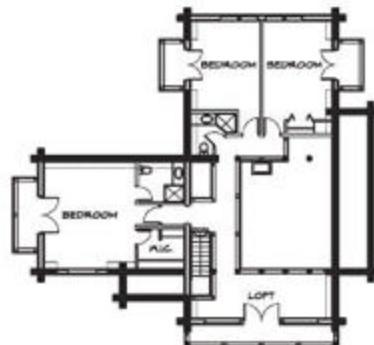
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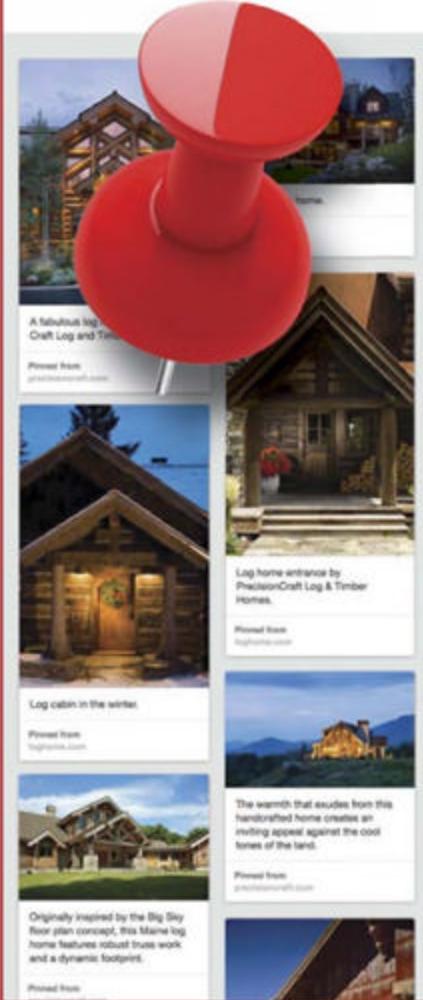


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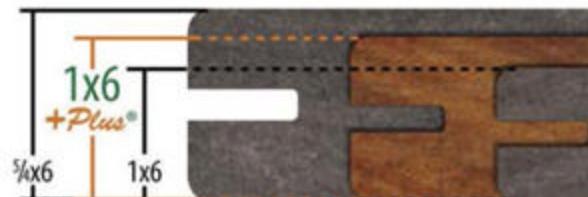
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